THE SECOND DAY.

Tuesday, the 28th February 1928.

The Assembly met again at 11·30 A. M. on Tuesday the 28th February 1928, and the consideration of the subjects, according to the list distributed among the members on the previous day, was taken up.

1. Removal of the export duty on tea.

MR. ALBERT J. WRIGHT (*Member, Kannan Devan Planters' Association*) stated that the levy of the export duty on tea was a war measure introduced in 1916 in which the Travancore Government had followed the example of the British Indian Government. The British Indian Government had in their last Budget abolished the duty, but the duty was still retained in Travancore. The retention of the duty by the Travancore Government placed the Travancore cultivators at a disadvantage in comparison with the cultivators in British India and Ceylon. The levy of the duty at a fixed rate of Re. 1 as 8 per 100 lbs. was also liable to bear unevenly on the producers, as no account was taken of the value of the commodity which differed considerably in different localities and under different climatic conditions. Further, the duty bore hard upon young plantations, where in the early stages of production little or no profit could be expected. The imposition of the duty was thus likely to hamper the development of the tea industry in more ways than one. Indications were already discernible of tea planters turning their attention from Travancore. The member therefore urged for an early abolition of the duty.

DEWAN'S REPLY: Mr. Wright, if I remember correctly the General Manager of the Kannan Devan Hills Produce Company representing the tea industry in Travancore said that he would be in a position to inform Government of what is happening elsewhere in the matter of taxation on tea after he went to Calcutta and met the authorities there. I have not heard anything further from him on the subject. As soon as I hear from him, I shall take up the question for consideration.

You dwelt upon the fact that this export duty might act detrimentally to Travancore tea in the competitive market. I should very much have liked to hear from you the cost of production per pound in Travancore. That I think should be the determining factor as to whether Travancore can hold its own or not in the competitive market. As far as I can make out—I watch the weekly tea sales in London-Travancore tea is well able to hold its own. There are of course grades of tea and prices vary. But I am inclined to think that the cost of production also varies. When you go back I shall be glad if you, as representing the Travancore tea industry here, would put me in possession of figures as to the cost of production per pound.

2. Abolition of tolls, market dues, etc.

MR. C. T. GEEVARGHESE MUTALALI (*Member, Kunnatur taluk*) said that the question of tolls had attracted considerable attention both on the floor of the Legislative Council and in the Press. A resolution had been passed in the Council for the abolition of tolls ; but several toll-gates were still retained by Government. No small injury was caused to the public by these toll-gates. In the first place, while the income from tolls was used for the maintenance of the roads all over the country, the burden of their payment fell entirely on the shoulders of the people in the particular localities where they were collected. This could be illustrated by an example. There was a toll-gate at Adur. The income from that toll-gate was probably used for improving a road in far-off Changanachery. The people of Changanachery who enjoyed the benefit of the road had, however, no toll to pay. It was the poor cart-men of Adur who paid it.

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The condition of the cart-men at Adur was particularly worthy of sympathy. They had to pay a very heavy toll at one or other of the local toll-gates on every day of the year. Again, tolls while a source of inconvenience to the public did not result in much benefit to Government. What profit accrued from the collection of tolls really went into the pockets of the contractors. The people who suffered most from tolls were the owners of motor vehicles, particularly the eight-seater cars and buses plying between the various places. These motor vehicles in addition to being the chief means of transport in the country furnished employment to several men. The levy of tolls at every corner of the road was a great hindrance to the development of motor traffic in the country. If instead of these tolls a licence fee was levied in accordance with the size and weight of the vehicles, Government could get lakhs of rupees out of this head alone. Even worse than tolls were the market dues, which should also be abolished. These were a burden on the poor people who earned their livelihood by selling little things in the markets.

DEWAN'S REPLY: Mr. Geevarghese Mutalali, I see from the proceedings that you represent the Kunnathur taluk. But from your speech I might have imagined that you represent the motor bus industry in Travancore. However, I shall give you a few particulars to help you to realise the incidence of tolls in Travancore. I am referring to Government tolls. In regard to municipal toll gates you have already representatives on the municipal councils. In other words, the municipalities are the people and if they feel the weight of municipal tolls, it is up to them through their representatives on the municipal council to get the tolls abolished.

In regard to Government toll-gates, there are about 15 toll-gates in the State and they cover an area of 4,500 miles of roads—in other words, one toll-gate to every 300 miles. I do not think that is a terrible hardship. Then, looking at it in another way, roughly speaking, the present population of Travancore is in the neighbourhood of 45 lakhs of people. 45 lakhs of people pay 3 lakhs of rupees a year by way of toll. That is to say, 45 people pay Rs. 3 or 15 people pay one rupee in the year. Each head of population thus pays one anna a year towards the convenience and the comfort of numerous roads in the State. I do not think that is too terrible a hardship to bear.

3. Certain changes in the administration of the Land Revenue Department.

MR. KANAKKU MATHEVAN PILLAI PERUMAL PILLAI (*Member, Agastisvaram taluk*) said that the system of land revenue collections in the State was open to much criticism. There were no accounts in any of the pakuthies to show correctly the various items of revenue due from the pakuthies or the persons from whom the revenue was due. The old Settlement Registers were never brought up to date and *pokkuvaravu* was not effected regularly. These were only a few defects; there were many others. The member suggested the following means for curing these defects:—

(*a*) Persons holding better examination qualifications should be appointed in the pakuthi cutcherries and they should be given comparatively better pay. Arrangements should also be made for the regular disbursement of the pay every month.

(*b*) Arrangements should be made for the disposal of *pokkuvaravu* cases arising every year before the close of the year.

(*c*) The system of keeping duplicates of tax receipts should be introduced in the Revenue Department.

(*d*) Copies of daily accounts of tax collections should be regularly forwarded to the taluk office.

(*e*) Due notice should be sent to pattadars residing in one pakuthy of the tax due from them in other pakuthies.

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